

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 ISO-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02

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S/S:DMACK

S/PRS:FBROWN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS NIACT IMMEDIATE

USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USCINCSO

UNCLAS STATE 234464 TOSEC 270523

SAN SALVADOR FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHLAUDEMAN

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR CI

SUBJECT: DEATH OF FORMER CHILEAN AMBASSADOR LETELIER

DEPUTY SPOKESMAN MADE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AND TOOK QS

AND AS IN DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING TODAY:

BEGIN TEXT:

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-----THE DEPARTMENT WAS INFORMED THIS MORNING OF THE DEATH

IN WASHINGTON OF DR. ORLANDO LETELIER, THE FORMER CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES. AN EXPLOSION OCCURRED IN AN AUTOMOBILE WHICH DR. LETELIER WAS DRIVING IN THE 2300 BLOCK OF MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, AT APPROXIMATELY 0930 A.M. TODAY. DR. LETELIER WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD ON ARRIVAL AT GEORGE WASHINGTON HOSPITAL. ONE OTHER PASSENGER IN THE CAR WAS KILLED, A SECOND PASSENGER, CRITICALLY INJURED. THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN POLICE ARE PURSUING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS TRAGIC OCCURRENCE.

-----DR. LETELIER SERVED AS AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES FROM 1971 TO 1973. HE PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, RESIDENT IN WASHINGTON. FOLLOWING HIS AMBASSADORIAL ASSIGNMENT, HE RETURNED TO CHILE AND SERVED AS MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, AND

LATER AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF FORMER CHILEAN PRESIDENT SALVADORE ALLENDE GOSENS. DR. LETELIER RESIDED IN THE WASHINGTON AREA AND WAS A PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE TRANS-NATIONAL INSTITUTE, OF 1901 Q STREET.

-----THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE EXPRESSES ITS GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT DR. LETELIER'S TRAGIC DEATH AND EXTENDS ITS DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS WIFE AND FAMILY. NOW BEFORE GOING ON TO MY THIRD STATEMENT, I WILL TAKE QUESTIONS ON THESE TWO.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHO IS DEAD, THE OTHER PERSON WHO IS DEAD-- THE MAN OR THE WOMAN?

A. I UNDERSTAND THE MALE PASSENGER IS DEAD (CORRECTION: IT WAS THE MALE PASSENGER WHO SURVIVED.) BUT SINCE THE TWO PASSENGERS IN THE CAR ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS, WE ARE NOT, UNDER THE PRIVACY ACT, AT THIS MOMENT PERMITTED TO GIVE OUT THEIR NAMES.

Q. FRED, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OR HAS ANY GROUP CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY OR CREDIT OR WHATEVER THE PROPER WORD WOULD BE FOR THIS ACT?

A. I HAVE NO INFORMATION ON ANY GROUP.
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Q. THE TRANS-NATIONAL INSTITUTE IS A DIVISION OF THE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES, WHICH IN THE PAST HAS RECEIVED THREATS. IS THERE A CONNECTION?

A. I HAVE NO IDEA. I HAVE NO INFORMATION ON ANY GROUP CLAIMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EXPLOSION.

Q. WAS THE CAR WIRED WITH A BOMB, OR WAS THE BOMB THROWN AT IT, OR -- ?

A. THE EXPLOSION IS DESCRIBED AS "THE RESULT OF AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE", NOT A BOMB. THAT IS SIMPLY BECAUSE, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE POLICE HAVE NOT HAD A CHANCE, REALLY, TO ANALYZE THE RESULTS OF THEIR INITIAL --

Q. YOUR STATEMENT SAID THE EXPLOSION WAS IN THE CAR.

A. YES.

Q. DOES THAT MEAN THAT THERE WAS AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE ATTACHED TO THE CAR?

A. THIS, I DO NOT KNOW. I TRIED TO GET A CLARIFICATION OF HOW THE EXPLOSION OCCURRED, AND WAS TOLD THAT THE BEST WAY TO DESCRIBE IT, AT THIS EARLY MOMENT, IS "EXPLOSIVE DEVICE."

Q. HAD HE BEEN THREATENED? DS ANY ONE KNOW?

A. I HAVE NO IDEA.

Q. IS THE DEPARTMENT AWARE OF ANY GROUPS HERE THAT WOULD HAVE ANY REASON FOR KILLING HIM? ANY GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN AFTER FORMER ALLENDE OFFICIALS?

A. I HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THAT AT ALL.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY FORMER OFFICIALS OF THE ALLENDE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN ASSISTED BY THE UNITED STATES

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CONCERNING THEIR RELEASE FROM PRISON AND THE GRANTING OF RESIDENCE VISAS IN THE UNITED STATES? LETELIER WAS ONE. DO YOU KNOW ANY OTHER CABINET --

A. I DO NOT. I KNOW A RATHER SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER WHO HAVE BENEFITED FROM OUR ASSISTANCE IN RECENT MONTHS, TO LEAVE CHILE, BUT AS TO HOW MANY WERE OF CABINET RANK, OR PROMINENT, I HAVE NO IDEA.

Q. FRED, THE NAMES OF THESE OTHER TWO PEOPLE IN THE CAR HAVE BEEN RELEASED -- AT LEAST THEY ARE ON THE NEWS WIRES, SO IT'S PUBLIC INFORMATION. IT'S A MAN AND A WIFE WHOSE NAME I DID NOT BRING IN HERE WITH ME. THE WIFE IS THE ONE WHO IS LISTED AS KILLED, AND THE HUSBAND IN CRITICAL CONDITION?

A. I WAS TOLD IT WAS THE OTHER WAY AROUND, BUT --

Q. IN ANY EVENT, WERE THEY ASSOCIATED WITH LETELIER
IN HIS WORK, OR PERSONALLY?

A. I DO NOT KNOW.

----I THINK I WILL HAVE TO HOLD OFF ON TALKING ABOUT THE
OTHER TWO PEOPLE AS THEY ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS AND UNDER
THE PRIVACY ACT I SIMPLY CANNOT DO IT FROM THIS PARTICULAR
PODIUM. AS SOON AS IT BECOMES PUBLIC DOMAIN --

1. YOU DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY WERE ASSOCIATED IN BUSINESS
WITH HIM, OR PERSONAL FRIENDS, OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A. I DO NOT KNOW. I THINK WITH REGARD TO THE PASSENGERS
IN THE CAR YOUR BEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION WOULD BE THE
POLICE RATHER THAN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, SINCE THEY ARE
AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THE POLICE HAVE JURISDICTION OVER
THAT. END OF TEXT. FOR LONDON, BUCHAREST AND DUBLIN.
FYI. INCIDENT OCCURRED ON MASS AVENUE BETWEEN RUMANIAN
AND IRISH EMBASSIES. ROBINSON

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